

Policy and Resources Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	5 February 2025
Report Title	Housing Benefits War Pensions Policy
EMT Lead	Lisa Fillery, Director of Resources
Head of Service	Zoe Kent, Head of Revenues and Benefits
Lead Officer	Zoe Kent, Head of Revenues and Benefits
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To adopt the Housing Benefits War Pensions policy.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 Under the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 a weekly disregard of £10.00 applies to War Disablement Pensions and War Widow's Pensions when taken as income towards the calculation of Housing Benefit.
- 1.2 The Social Security Administration Act 1992 also allows Councils the discretion to disregard up to 100% of War Disablement Pensions and War Widow's Pensions. The purpose of this report is to adopt the Housing Benefits War pensions policy.

2 Background

- 2.1 In the 1980s councils were able to put a policy in place to disregard pre 1973 War Disablement Pensions in full from Housing Benefit. In 1990 this was changed by the Government to cover all pre 1973 and post 1973 War Disablement Pensions (now called the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme).
- 2.2 Swale Borough Council approved the disregard in full of War Disablement Pensions and War Widow's Pensions at this time and this has been in place since then.
- 2.3 As part of the auditing of Housing Benefit subsidy claims, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) requires evidence that this policy was approved by Members. Records from this time are still kept in paper format and it has not been possible to find this evidence. A policy has therefore been written giving details of all War Pensions that are covered by the scheme. This can be found in part 3 of appendix I – Housing Benefits - War Pension Policy.
- 2.4 The cost of the expenditure is partly met as part of the subsidy claim. Providing that expenditure does not exceed 0.2% of the overall subsidy claimed, 75% of payments made under the local scheme are subsidised by the DWP, with the council meeting the remaining 25%. As the working age caseload has moved to Universal Credit and the number of elderly veterans has declined this expenditure has reduced over recent years.

2.5 The cost of the scheme for 2024/25 was £13,702.80. 75% of this cost (£10,277.10) was met by the subsidy claim. 25% of the cost (£3,425.70) was met by the Council.

3 Proposals

3.1 To adopt the Housing Benefit War Pensions policy. The original policy has been in place since the late 1980s. This is a small cost in relation to the full cost of Housing Benefit Subsidy to support local residents who have been disabled through their service to the country or have lost partners whilst part of the armed services.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

4.1 Do nothing, this is not the preferred option. Many ex-servicemen and women live on low incomes and often suffer from ill health. This additional support helps them to use their war pensions towards living expenditure rather than rent costs.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 Discussions have taken place with the armed forces champions (officer and member).

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The objectives and priorities in the corporate plan.
Financial, Resource and Property	The majority of this expenditure is covered by Housing Benefit Subsidy. This disregard of War Pensions has been in place since the late 1980s and has not been a significant cost to the Borough.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 and the Social Security Administration Act 1992
Crime and Disorder	None
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None
Health and Wellbeing	Veterans can often have additional health problems, by disregarding war pensions in full, war veterans can use their war pensions towards their health and wellbeing.

Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	War veterans may be vulnerable, for this reason Swale Borough Council has an armed forces champion. The Housing Benefit team work with the champion to ensure claims are dealt with appropriately and support is provided.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None
Equality and Diversity	An equalities impact assessment has been completed.
Privacy and Data Protection	The recommendations will impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council processes. The Data Protection Officer will have reviewed the processing of personal data affected and the associated documentation will be updated accordingly.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:
- Appendix I: Housing Benefit War Pensions policy
 - Appendix II: Equality Impact Assessment

8 Background Papers

None